

Message Text

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NODIS CHEROKEE SECRET

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK, US

SUBJECT: RHODESIA - SMITH-NKOMO TALKS PROPOSAL

FROM AMBASSADOR LOW - SENT TO LUSAKA FOR INFO PER REQ AMB LOW

1. YOU WILL HAVE SEEN GRAHAM'S/MY MESSAGE PASSED VIA BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON RECOUNTING OUR TUESDAY JUNE 27 CONVERSATION WITH GAYLORD IN WHICH HE PROPOSES A SMITH-NKOMO MEETING IN ZAMBIA UNDER UK-US AND ZAMBIAN AUSPICES. ALTHOUGH I AT FIRST FEARED THAT SMITH WAS BACKING AWAY FROM HIS EARLIER OFFER TO ATTEND A SECRET ALL PARTIES MEETING OF PRINCIPALS, UNDER QUESTIONING IT APPEARED THAT SMITH AND GAYLORD FEAR GOING INTO THE ALL PARTIES MEETING (AT WHICH UNPREDICTABLE ELEMENTS LIKE MUGABE AND THE BISHOP WOULD BE PRESENT) WITHOUT A NAIRLY CLEAR UNDERSTANDING WITH NKOMO FIRST.

2. NEVERTHELESS, I PERSONALLY AM LEERY ON SMITH'S PROPOSAL. WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE SUDDEN HURRY. (GAYLORD SAID IT WAS BECAUSE SUCH A MEETING HAD TO BE OVER A WEEKEND. SMITH WAS TIED UP THE 8/9 WEEKEND AND NKOMO WOULD PROBABLY BE AT THE OAU SUMMIT THE 15/16.) TRYING TO ARRANGE THIS IN THE TWO DAYS REMAINING SEEMS TO ME CHANCY - PARTICULARLY IF WE HAVE TO OPERATE THROUGH THIRD PARTIES AS DR. OWEN SUGGESTS. (PERSONALLY I WOULD MUCH PREFER DEALING DIRECTLY WITH CHONA AND KAUNDA OURSELVES.) THE ZAMBIANS WILL BE ALL TIED UP

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THURSDAY WITH THE VISIT OF GERMAN CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT TO COMPLICATE MATTERS.

3. ASIDE FROM THE TIMING, I AM CONCERNED ABOUT GETTING TOO INVOLVED OURSELVES IN NKOMO'S MACHINATIONS. THEY MAY WELL PROVIDE A WAY OUT. IF HE IS SUCCESSFUL WE CAN LOOK AT WHAT HE PRODUCES. BUT IT SEEMS TO ME QUITE POSSIBLE THAT

IT WOULD END UP EXCLUDING ONE MAJOR GROUP OR ANOTHER (MUGOE OR MUZOREWA) THERE IS A RISK OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN ANY ARRANGEMENT WHICH POSTPONES ELECTIONS FOR A SUBSTANTIAL PERIOD OF TIME. EVEN WORSE WOULD BE ONE THAT INCLUDES ONLY SOME OF THE MAJOR PARTIES. FINALLY I BELIEVE IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT NKOMO OR KAUNDA WOULD ACCEPT THIS OFFER. UNTIMELY PUBLICITY HURTS THEM AND US MORE THAN SMITH - THOUGH HE TOO RUNS SOME RISK.

4. IT IS MY GUESS THAT NKOMO IS TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER A UNITED PF ALONG THE LINES HE WAS ON THE VERGE OF LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN THE SMITH VISIT TO LIAKA DESTROYED THE EFFORT. THOUGH I HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF IT, I WOULD THINK IT LOGICAL THAT NKOMO COULD BE TRYING TO USE KAUNDA NETO, AND MACHEL TO PRESSURE MUGABE AND TONGAGARA INTO A UNIFIED PF WITH NKOMO AT THE HEAD BY THREATENING THEM OR OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF IMPRISONED ZANU LEADERS HAMADZIRIPI, GUMBO, MUDZI, TADERERA, ETC. ANY MEETING WITH SMITH BEFORE THIS HAD BEEN TIED DOWN WOULD WRECK THE EFFORT. ALL THIS I ADMIT IS HIGHLY SPECULATIVE AND I MAY BE WRONG IN VIEW OF NKOMO'S APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO MEET MEMBERS OF THE REGIME.

5. ON BALANCE THEREFORE, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD FLOAT WITH NKOMO THE SMITH PROPOSAL FOR A SECRET ALL PARTIES MEETING OF PRINCIPALS. I ALSO BELIVE WE SHOULD MENTION SMITH'S DESIRE FOR A PRELIMINARY MEETING WITH NKOMO BUT SAY (AS JOHNNY AND I RECOMMENDED IN OUR REPORT YESTERDAY) THAT WE WOULD NOT INVOLVE OUUSELVES UNLESS THERE WAS FRONTLINE (KAUNDA) AND PERHAPS NIGERIAN PARTICIPATION. THIS
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WOULD MAKE A MEETING THIS WEEKEND IMPOSSIBLE BUT MUCH CAUTION IS WARRANTED IN MY VIEW.

I WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR SOME REACTION FROM YOU TO LUSAKA TODAY ON THE ABOVE . WE ARE DUE TO SEE NKOMO THURSDAY MORNING (2 A. M. WASHINGTON TIME).

SHEINBAUM

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NNN

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